

THE AMERICAN  
NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 5. Vol. XI.]

OCTOBER, 1836.

[WHOLE No. 125.]

SERMON CCXXVI.

BY REV. EDWARD F. CUTTER,  
WARREN, MAINE.

THE HARVEST PAST.

JEREMIAH viii. 20. *The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.*

IN the verses preceding the text, the prophet predicts an approaching invasion of the Chaldeans, upon the land of Judah. In strong and expressive language, he describes the desolations, that would attend their march. The grapes should perish from the vine, and the figs from the fig tree; and even the leaf should fade. Their land being thus laid waste, the inhabitants of Judah would consult together to flee to the defenced cities, and hide themselves there in silent fear; "for the Lord their God had put them to silence, and, because of their sins, given them water of gall for their drink."

Meanwhile the hosts of the enemy came on with rapid step. Their troops, were so numerous that the snorting of the war horses echoed through the whole land. Their fierceness and cruelty equalled their numbers. They are compared to deadly and venomous serpents and cockatrices, who would not be tamed by any charm, but would fasten their poisonous fangs upon all alike. This denoted the blood-thirsty spirit of the Chaldeans, who would spare neither age nor sex, but imbrue their hands in the blood of all, old and young, the infant of a few days, and the hoary headed veteran of three-score winters.

In this state of desolation the children of Judah would be overwhelmed with terror. When they sought comfort against sorrow, their hearts would faint within them, their cry would be great, their minds would be turned to their God and King, whom they had justly provoked to bring upon them this fearful desolation. But their sins had hid his face, and from him no deliverance came. The season in which they might have looked for aid from their allies, the Egyptians had also passed: the summer months were gone, and the autumnal season was rapidly wasting, the winter was fast approaching, in which no army could be expected to come to their relief. Every hope of safety or deliver-

ance was cut off: all was dark and cheerless, and they exclaimed in the pathetic lamentation of the text, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." The season in which we might have looked for deliverance has forever fled, and we are still without means of escape. What shall we do? where turn our eyes? whither direct our steps? shall light yet break upon us, and hope once more cheer the soul: or shall we perish here by the sword of the enemy, or pine away under the wasting of famine and disease? We may imagine the feelings and perplexities of a people thus situated: we may form some idea of their distress and anxiety, as the season of hope passed away and no deliverance came, till the heart, already too often made sick by hope deferred, was shrouded in despair, and they settled down upon the fatal conviction that all expectation of safety was forever cut off. But what are such sufferings and anxieties, agonizing as they are, when compared with those of the sinner, who procrastinates the work of salvation so long, as to suffer the favorable opportunity of securing it to slip away, and awakes at last to the bitter consciousness, that the harvest is past, the summer ended, but his soul is not saved? It is, that I may, so far as lies in my power, warn all of you against this dreadful end, that I have chosen these words as the theme of our meditation on the present occasion. In the remarks to be offered upon them, I propose to consider,

I. Some seasons, that ought to be regarded, as special seasons, and opportunities, of seeking salvation.

II. The danger of suffering such seasons to pass unimproved.

Let us then notice some of the seasons that ought to be regarded as peculiarly favorable to seeking, and securing salvation.

The period of our natural life is the great season of probation; God has been pleased at various eras of his government to grant unto man an allotted number of years upon earth, in which to gather up provision for immortality.

The years of the antediluvians were many, their life was protracted through many centuries, and they were permitted to see their posterity to many generations; but when they waxed mighty in sin, and instead of improving their long life as a means of growth in holiness, made it an occasion of more exceeding iniquity Jehovah, declared that "his Spirit should not always strive with man," and he reduced the number of his days to one hundred and twenty years. Afterward, in the time of Moses, he again limited man's sojourn on earth to threescore years and ten: this brief period now comprises the entire season of probation. There is no work, nor device, in the grave: but, after death cometh the judgment. Life viewed in this light, is clothed with a value and importance, which cannot attach to it under any other aspect. For, when considered with reference to its duration, it is a shadow that vanisheth away—the flower of the field that withereth in an hour,—the vapor that is dried up by the earliest sunbeam—it is even as an hand-breadth. When considered with reference to its pursuits, its joys or its sorrows, they are mean, worthless, transitory—light as bubbles that float in the summer air. But when regarded as a season of preparation for eternity, life, though brief its duration and transitory its pursuits, has a value no human mind can estimate:

"It is the hour that God has given,  
To 'scape from hell and fly to heaven."

The Bible every where presents it to our consideration in this solemn light. And we ourselves in seasons of anxiety or suffering, are led to adopt similar views. Thus sickness or the approach of death causes many a careless sinner to look upon life, not as a season of mere earthly business or pleasure, but as a period, big with eternal interests. The hour of death is indeed to every individual, what the great day of account is to the world, a season of harvest, when all the seeds sown in the present life will yield their natural fruit. "They that have sown to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: and they that have sown to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." How many, in that hour of deep and solemn interest, who have sported away their precious life in pleasure's giddy round, and have toiled amid scenes of ambition or interest, to the neglect of the one thing needful, are left to cry, in bitter but un-availing repentance, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, but we are not saved!"

There are however some periods of life, which afford more favorable opportunities than others for seeking the salvation of the soul, these claim especial notice. Thus the days of childhood and youth offer more promising seasons than any subsequent stage of life. The habits of sin are then less firmly fixed: the character is yet in the process of formation, the mind and heart are more susceptible and open to impression, the entangling influence of worldly companions is weaker: and the cares and avocations of life are less annoying and multifarious, than in middle life or old age. Moreover religious truth then comes fresh to the mind. It is new, and its motives have not been presented and resisted, till they have lost all power to interest or move. The child will weep when told of a Savior's sufferings; his tender sympathies will all be awake when you speak to him of the manger, the crown of thorns, the purple robe, and the cross. His eye will fasten with unwearied attention, on his mother's face, and his ear drink in every word, as she tells of the pearly gates, the golden streets, the chrystal fountains, the shining robes, and glorious songs of heaven. The affecting story of Joseph or Samuel, beloved of God, from early childhood, will touch his heart and excite his emulation. But how soon does he lose this interest, and become hardened against these impressions! What mother has not had occasion to mourn, that, as her children advanced in years, the difficulty of gaining their attention to religious conversation has increased, and their aversion to religious truth has increased also. Youth is indeed a most favorable season to seek after God. Even with the aid of natural observation alone, we may see it is a favored hour, a day of grace, which once neglected, never returns. And the Bible by its invitations and promises, abundantly confirms this truth, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," says the royal preacher, "while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them." "They that seek me early," is the promise of God, "shall find me." "Suffer little children to come unto me," says the blessed Savior, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Another season, deserving special notice, is the time of health and reason

This demands careful attention, because many would put off the whole work of salvation to a sick bed or dying hour. A moment's reflection will teach all such the absurdity and folly of such procrastination. Is there, in the whole compass of subjects which invite man's notice in the present life, one which demands so early and careful attention as religion? Is there one which calls for the exercise of mental vigor and strength in so great a degree as this? We act more wisely in reference to temporal affairs. No man thinks of postponing his most difficult and important business to the hour of sickness. On the contrary he improves the day of health in arranging his affairs and securing his interests; but, when he is urged to provide for the welfare of his soul, his wisdom often deserts him, and he would put off attention to this momentous subject till the hour of sickness and death. How well might God reply, as in the days of Malichi, "If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil?" What? should the day of health and mental vigor be wasted in sin, and the hours of weakness and pain alone be consecrated to God? No! it is a delusion. The true harvest time, the proper season for laying up provision for immortality is while we are in the enjoyment of health and reason. The aut improves the warm days and clear, pleasant sunshine of summer, to gather her winter stores. And many a sluggard in spiritual things might go to her and be taught a lesson of wisdom. Sickness is to man, as the dread winter to her, the hour when he needs to satisfy his soul on the provision laid by in summer in the days of health, when all is bright and cheerful, and his mind is able to grasp the weighty realities of eternity. It is an hour of weakness and pain, when the mind itself is half distracted by the decay of its tenement, and a thousand dark forebodings of evil that depress the spirits, unhinge the judgment and almost unfit the man for calm and sober reflection. How melancholy the situation of those who come to such an hour and are called to bear, besides all other mental and bodily suffering, the agonizing thought that the summer is ended, and they yet have made no provision for the winter that has already overtaken them!

A third season, claiming notice as a day of grace, is the Sabbath. God has hallowed this day for himself. He has clothed it with deep and awful interest, as a season of rest from worldly care and of special consecration to his service. He has made it the day of prayer. He has taught his children to open wide the gates of his sanctuary, and sound forth the note of invitation to all who will come up to the courts of the Lord. He has placed his heralds upon the walls of Zion, and commanded them to proclaim in the ears of every passer-by, the great messages of his word. In short, he has made the Sabbath for man; and, like all other gifts of our heavenly Father's hand, it is appointed for man's good. It is designed as a barrier to the flood of sin and temptation, that rolls around us during all the week. It is to stand as a friendly and whispering monitor at the door of every man's conscience, reminding him at the dawn of each week of eternal realities. It is therefore a peculiarly favorable season for seeking God. It breaks off, in a measure, the current of worldly business: it admonishes of eternity: it leads the feet to the house of God: it

brings to the ear the motives to repentance and the message of salvation: it places the man within the hallowed influence of consecrated time and under the droppings of the sanctuary. How many circumstances favorable to salvation, thus cluster round this hallowed day! How appropriately may we apply to it the language of the apostle; "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation: To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

There are moreover some seasons in the life of almost every individual, when the kingdom of God, in an especial manner, has come nigh unto him. These cannot all be minutely described, or accurately specified. There are hours of reflection which sometimes arrest the most careless and light hearted in the midst of their thoughtlessness and mirth. The smile passes from the cheek, and is replaced by the sober expression of deep thought. The gush of merriment from the heart is checked, and the flow of solemn reflection succeeds. The tone of laughter dies away on the tongue, and the language of anxious inquiry bursts from the trembling lip. It is an hour of meditation—it may be—of solitary meditation. The individual is alone with his God. The witching influence of gay companions is unfelt: the charming notes of the world are unheard: and the heart awakes to better feelings, to more serious thought. The Bible may lie within his reach. Almost unconsciously he lays his hand upon it. He opens the sacred page. He reads with unwonted interest and attention. The wandering thoughts that usually haunt him when perusing divine truth, do not disturb him now; but he reads with deep and all-absorbing interest. The word touches his conscience. It may be he has opened to the page, wheron are inscribed "the terrors of the Lord;" and he trembles under the sound: or his eye may have rested on the sweet invitations of the gospel, and he half inclines to accept without farther delay: or the touching story of a Savior's love and death may have arrested his attention, and almost melted his yielding heart, and bowed his half subdued will. O! what an hour! How alive with all that is most dear to man! The Spirit's still small voice is whispering to that sinner's heart. It is the harvest time—the summer season with his soul. He has begun to think; he sees his danger: he feels the need of a Savior: he is almost persuaded to be a Christian. But alas! the world rushes in: his hour of retirement has past: his season of reflection ended: his Bible is closed and laid aside, and he may weep, when it is too late, that he neglected this favored hour for embracing the offers of the gospel, and securing the salvation of his soul.

Besides these seasons in the history of individuals, there are also circumstances, connected with the progress of religion in the world, which render some periods more than usually favorable for seeking God. Jehovah is pleased, at sundry times and in divers places, to bestow an unwonted efficacy upon the means of grace. He sheds down the influences of his Spirit, that fall upon the hearts of his people, as dew and showers upon the face of the earth.—As, after a long drought, all the plants of the field are parched and ready to perish, but revive and bloom in renewed verdure and beauty, under the cooling influence of summer showers; so the church, become cold and barren from the long absence of the dews of the Spirit, revives under the opening windows of mercy, and shines forth in more than pristine beauty and grace. The



altars of prayer smoke with the offerings of willing hearts, the clouds of incense roll up to the skies, the tithes are poured into the storehouse, and God opens the windows of heaven and pours down a rich blessing. The shower descends not only on "the sunny hill of Zion," but it waters also all the plain around. Sinners feel its influence. The house of prayer is more frequented. The means of grace are more diligently sought after and prized. The preaching of the word, clothed with "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power," touches the conscience and affects the heart. God himself speaks in his sanctuary. He speaks from the lips of his ministering servants. He encourages their hearts: he strengthens their hands: and makes them rejoice, as them that labor not in vain, nor spend their strength for naught. By and by the enquiry is heard, What must I do to be saved? It breaks from many lips. Their anxiety has become too overwhelming to allow sinners to sit longer in silence. They must arise and seek the way to Zion. With trembling hearts they set their faces thitherward, with faltering step they press onward, faint, and almost ready to give up the pursuit; till by and by they catch a glimpse of the cross; the eye of faith fastens on a bleeding, dying Savior, and the burden rolls off. Joy takes the place of mourning. The garments of praise are put on for the spirit of heaviness: their tears are dried, and with cheerful rejoicing hearts they unite themselves with the people of God.

Such seasons God has been pleased often to grant to his people. They are as the summer time and the harvest months to the church. But they are also periods of awful responsibility to the sinner, who passes through them unconverted. He has rejected more than ordinary means of grace, has resisted the strivings of the Spirit, and hardened his heart, and closed his ear against the still, small voice of God. He has seen others yielding to the commands and invitations of the gospel. The circle of his friends and companions has been broken up: for some, once eager as himself in the pursuits of earth, have forsaken all their old objects of attachment, and chosen Christ. His own heart may have been affected, when he saw them pressing into the kingdom of God; but he has not followed their example. Meanwhile the summer is flying: the harvest is coming rapidly on; the cloud of mercy may soon roll away, the voice of the Spirit be hushed, and the heavenly dove wing its flight; yet he is unconcerned. O! if the whole season of refreshing should pass unimproved, and he be called from earth, ere another such opportunity should visit his soul, how bitter must be his reflections, as, in reverting from a dying bed to the scenes of mercy through which he has lived, he shall mourn, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, but I am not saved."

II. I proceed to notice, secondly, the danger of suffering such special seasons of grace to pass unimproved. My limits will not allow me to dwell upon the topic, nor indeed is it necessary. For a moment's reflection must teach every thinking mind the jeopardy of neglecting such favored hours. It was a neglect of this kind that excluded the foolish virgins from the bridegroom's supper. They neglected to procure the oil for their lamps, till so late an hour, that the doors were forever shut before they were ready to enter. This also robbed Esau of his birthright and blessing. He sought a place for repentance,

but it was too late, and therefore found it not. So it is with sinners under the moral government of God. There are hours of mercy, when they may grasp the promise and make eternal life their own. If these are neglected they must bear the painful consequences. If they waste the fleeting sands of life in frivolous amusements, or unprofitable cares, they will reap accordingly. If the season of youth be devoted to mirth, they cannot complain that old age finds them without stay or staff. If health and reason be frittered away upon trifles, they cannot wonder that the sick-bed and dying pillow should be planted with thorns. If the holy light of the Sabbath beam upon them in vain; if their hours of deep and solemn meditation leave no lasting impression: if the descending influences of God's own Spirit move not to active effort, where is the power that will break their slumber? where the voice that can speak in tones loud enough to awaken them God's from their lethargy? where the influence sweet enough to lure them on to heaven? They surely cannot hope for a more favorable season, when the world shall unbind its chain and leave them unmolested to seek after God. Besides no future hour can find them as they are at present. Every day they continue in sin, they are sinking deeper in the snare, and the chains of ungodly habits are riveting upon them. The seasons of mercy, through which they have passed have left some impression. They have been as the rolling tide. If its flow has not set them towards the heavenly shore, its ebb has swept them out farther upon the fathomless deep. The heart of man must receive some impress from all the scenes of human life. God has so constituted it for wise purposes. It must either be hardened or melted under the beams of grace. The wax melts, but the clay hardens under the sun's ray; the reed bends, but the oak grows more inflexible, before the autumnal blast. So when the sun of righteousness beams, the heart that does not melt, hardens; and when the breath of the spirit passes over, the will that does not bow, becomes more obdurate. Here, in a word, lies the danger of neglecting such seasons of spiritual improvement. If neglected, they not only increase the sinner's responsibility and guilt, but they also harden him against the influence of future seasons, and thus leave him in a more hopeless and desperate situation than they found him, and thereby the last state of the man becomes worse than the first.

In leading your minds to the practical remarks, suggested by this subject, I notice, I. Its application to the young. You, my young friends, are highly favored of God. You have all the means of salvation in your hands, and you are now at that point in your probation, when religion invites your acceptance on the most favorable terms. Cares will multiply, and temptations will increase as you travel onward. O! improve then the present moment, to secure the salvation of the soul. Youth is the time when we lay up knowledge for after life. If a man waste his youth in idleness, it will cost him a mighty effort to repair his loss in after life. Let your youth then be devoted to the pursuit of the best of all knowledge—the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, which is life eternal. Suffer this season to pass, and you may sigh in vain, amid the cares of middle life and the weakness of old age, for the leisure of

youth, in which to secure the soul's salvation. Be assured the direction of wisdom, as well as the Bible, is, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

2. I notice in the next place, the application of this subject to those impenitent sinners, who have passed through revivals of religion unconverted. Yours is indeed a most perilous situation. How many warnings of the Bible, how many admonitions of conscience, how many strivings of the spirit have you resisted! Ah! fellow sinner, would you but pause and reflect on the season of harvest through which you have passed, without gathering any fruit into your garner: well might you tremble lest your soul be left portionless in eternity. And has the summer ended, while you are not saved? Can you then be unconcerned? Awake, awake, without delay, lest the winter of death set in upon you unawares, and your hopes be forever quenched in despair. True, you have resisted the mighty operations of God's grace, but still you are spared—still there is space for repentance. O! lift up the heart then in prayer for pardon—and like the man who has neglected the most favorable juncture of affairs, use double diligence lest you finally fail of the kingdom of God.

3. The subject speaks a note of warning to every impenitent sinner. These seasons of grace, these hours of mercy are all passing away. The summer is well nigh spent, the harvest is rolling on; he that would reap its fruit, must speedily thrust in his sickle. Life's sands are fast running out; youth, manhood, and age are fleeing like shadows across the plain; the tabernacle is fast crumbling and ready to perish: the Sabbath, with its hallowed privileges, the means of grace, and the refreshings of the Spirit will soon reach us no more. Soon we shall be forever beyond their sound and influence. And are you still in impenitence? Still secure in sin? What madness. Surely your soul is in jeopardy every hour while you delay: for there is but a step between thee and death. O! impenitent sinner what art thou doing? Lay aside thy earthly gold: dash down that cup of pleasure: trample that laurel under thy foot: and lay up treasure in heaven, and drink of the water of life, and put on an incorruptible crown. Delay not thy choice, for there's but a moment in which to make thy decision. All these earthly baubles will not quiet the pangs of thy death bed, or alter the terms of the judgment, if on looking back on a mispent life, conscience shall thunder in thy ear—The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and thou art not saved. Not saved! what then hast thou? Not saved! then art thou lost: and "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul."



## SERMON CCXXVII.

BY REV. DAVID MAGIE,  
ELIZABETHTOWN, N. J.

### CARELESSNESS ABOUT RELIGION UNREASONABLE.

ACTS xviii. 17. *And Gallio cared for none of these things.*

MAN differs from the beasts that perish, by possessing a capacity for thought and reflection. He alone of all the creatures on earth, is able to contemplate his own destiny, to weigh the consequences of present conduct, and thus to choose the good and refuse the evil. The entire world in which he lives, cannot set limits to his investigations. If so disposed, he can push his researches into Eternity itself, and dwell upon scenes which are to transpire long after his own body shall have been laid away in the dust.

But man is distinct from angels above him, as well as from animals below him, for he has the concerns of two worlds to attend to. His nature is compounded, made up of body and soul, and consequently there are two classes of objects which claim his regard—two interests neither of which he is at liberty to neglect. Besides making provision for a residence on earth, he has upon his hands the more important work of laying up a treasure in heaven. In order to fulfil the high purposes of his existence, he must not only be diligent in this world's business, but fervent in spirit serving the Lord.

By most men, however, one of these interests, and the one too of confessedly greatest moment, is lamentably overlooked. They are careful to prove their newly bought oxen, to examine their recently purchased farms, and to drive forward the affairs of their merchandise, but this is all, or nearly all they think of. Instead of making the salvation of the soul a matter of deep and daily concern, their chief inquiry is, what shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed! That part of their nature which likens them to brutes is provided for, but that which likens them to angels and to God, is forgotten.

Such a man, at least so far as religion is concerned, was Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia. He acted very discreetly, and as an honest, upright judge, in deciding that the difference between Paul and his accusers, was not of a character to require the interposition of any civil court. But we cannot commend his prudence or discretion in "*caring for none of these things.*" As a magistrate he did right in driving the vindictive Jews from his tribunal, but as a man he was deeply in fault for turning from such a subject with a cold and philosophical indifference.

But the thing which has been, is now. In a majority of cases it would seem that the men of our day, do not give to religion enough of care and thought, fairly to ascertain whether it has any special claims to their serious and immediate regard. Speculatively, perhaps, they admit that there is a hell; but they take no pains to avoid that place of torment. They grant that there is a heaven; after all they will not be persuaded to make one persevering effort to gain its bright and unfading crown. Religion floats loosely on the mere surface of the mind, without ever descending to touch the heart, or influence the conduct.

Now, is this carelessness to the interests of the soul, and of the world to come, reasonable? My object is to show that it is not.

1. Religion involves considerations deeply interesting, in themselves considered.

We can scarcely open the Bible without finding disclosures, in regard to time and eternity—this world and the next, of a character that may well challenge the fixed and earnest attention of every man on earth. The communications of this Holy Book, are grand and mighty beyond all conception. On one page it places before us the infinite, self-existent, eternal, almighty, omniscient, and omnipresent Jehovah, in whom we live, move, and have our being. On another, it informs us of the awful fact of our own apostacy, and of the guilt and wretchedness to which the entire race is exposed, both here and hereafter. On another still, it brings into view the glorious doctrine of a Mediator, and we see Jesus travelling in the greatness of his strength, to accomplish the amazing work of man's redemption. While on a fourth page, the scenes of the resurrection, the final judgement, the separation of the righteous and the wicked, and heaven and hell, are spread out in living colors before us.

Can any thing within the whole compass of human thought, be more grand and solemn? Are these subjects about which it is wise to trifle? Men will traverse half the globe to reach the top of some lofty mountain, or to stand a single hour upon the brink of some foaming cataract. Treasure and toil, and even life itself, are deemed to be well expended in tracing the course and fixing upon the head of one remote and wandering river. Things of this kind are wont to raise strong emotions. But tell me, is there nothing great, nothing sublime, nothing worth research in the idea of a God, a Deity incarnate, a throne of judgment, a crown of glory and a world of woe? The book of God outdoes in all these respects the works of God. On these sacred leaves are things calculated to raise sublimer sensations in the mind, than either the Alps or the Andes, or any of the far famed seven wonders of the world. Why then are the hearts of men dead to the grandeur of religion, while they are so alive to every other grandeur?

Besides, the matters with which religion has to do, are all practical in their bearing. The Bible does not exhibit to us the attributes of God merely to excite our wonder, but to lead us to love and obey him. It does not place before us a Savior bowing himself under the weight of a world's redemption, merely to move our sympathies, but to produce a permanent influence upon our hearts. It does not reveal to us a future state, merely that we may speculate about its bliss or woe, but that we may secure the one and avoid the other. The God the Bible makes known, is the God whom we are to choose as a Father and Friend. The Savior it reveals, is the Savior to whose bosom we must flee with the cares and sorrows of our aching hearts. The heaven it unfolds, is the heaven where we are to strive to live forever. The hell it tells us of, is the hell from which we are to labor and pray to be preserved. Every thing here comes home at once to the heart, as truth to be believed, as rules to be followed, as principles by which to be actuated, and as supports on which to lean.

No wonder then that religion works such a change in the character of all who are brought savingly under its influence. It lifts the poor out of the dung-hill and sets him far above the princes and nobles of the earth. The Dairyman's Daughter, or even the Praying Negro had loftier conceptions than the hero of the Nile, or the man whose eloquence so long swayed and enchained a British senate. And yet there are those who "care for none of these things." They can read, and think, and feel on other subjects. Heroes, statesmen, and philosophers all engage their attention, and they can admire the exploits recorded on the historic page. But there is nothing in the gospel of the blessed God, or the story of the wide spread influence of redeeming love upon which they can dwell with the least delight. Oh, is there taste, is there sentiment in such a state of mind as this?

2. The interests at stake here are all personal, and they are immense interests.

Religion, says the renowned Locke, if any thing, is every thing, and the

bare possibility of its proving true, should secure for it the earnest and solemn attention of every reflecting mind. This is the remark of one of the wisest men that ever lived, and no one can find it in his heart to dissent from its correctness. What then should be our feelings on this subject, when probability is reduced to certainty, and reasoning results in complete and triumphant demonstration? To be careless under such circumstances is folly indeed.

The object to be gained is the salvation of the soul. Grant then that the Bible is true, and it follows without dispute, that every man on earth is to enjoy the everlasting favor, or to suffer the everlasting frown of Him that made him. Each one of us is to reign in heaven or to burn in hell forever. What can counterbalance such an object. Put the material universe into the scale; and it has not the weight of a feather against a mountain. All computation fails. Arithmetic has no power to tell what would be the disaster of the man who should gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or the profit of the man, who should lose the world and save his soul.

Can you measure the blessedness which will be enjoyed by a single redeemed sinner, during the long lapse of eternity? The work is beyond an angel's reach. Well does the Apostle call the happiness of that bright and unchanging world, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

On the contrary, who can describe the misery of an eternal residence in the land of despair? There too all effort fails. No one can tell what will be the pain and agony of dwelling forever with devouring fire, of lying down in everlasting burnings! Never on this side of the grave shall we be able to measure that wretchedness which must be borne by the sinner, as he makes his long and gloomy journey in the world of woe.

Far smaller matters than these excite attention. What lines of care and anxiety are often drawn upon the brow of one, who is struggling after a little political distinction? How does the lover of this world's wealth toil and watch, by day and by night, to gather a heap of shining dust! Think of the tumult and agitation of the man, whose commercial credit is deeply pledged, and who sees no way open for the redemption of that pledge! Here we justify solicitude. But are men to feel no anxiety when the soul is in jeopardy? Is care out of place only when it concerns judgment and eternity? Answer these questions ye who deem it wise to forget God, and lose sight of your own final destiny.

3. We learn from the very nature of man, that religion is the concern to which he ought chiefly to attend.

Man, it has been well said, was made for religion; and religion, it may be added, was made for man. Why else has he an undying soul, as well as a dying body? Why else is not the grave the end of him? Why else does he feel such irrepressible longing after immortality? Why else is the whole world in which he lives unable to carry one cup of real consolation to his mouth? Fallen and ruined as he is, there is a divinity within, which not only "intimates Eternity to man," but urges him to prepare for that eternity.

The voice of nature, as well as the voice of revelation, decides that "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever." This was the design of his Maker in giving him existence, and this should be his own design in reference to that existence. Never should he be willing to live, under any circumstances, or during a single day, for any lower or meaner object than this. To call him a good farmer, an ingenious mechanic, or a prosperous merchant is nothing, unless you can also call him a sincere Christian. To say that he is a moral man, is nothing, unless his morality is based on religion. These may all have been, in some sense, ends of his being, but they were not the chief end, and a thousand woes must rest upon his head if he even regards them so.

Let me illustrate my idea. There is a father, a kind benevolent father, who assigns to a son various items of service, all of which he wishes him to perform in a particular way, and within a specified time. In order that his

own views may be fully understood, he describes them in writing, and hands the writing to his son. But in regard to the first duty on the list, the father makes a very special charge. Putting his finger on it and pointing it out again and again, he tells the son with deep emphasis, that this service must be attended to whatever else is omitted. Now, suppose the son goes his way, and performs every duty but this one. At length he comes to give in his account, and he does it with a great deal of self complacency, as if nothing further, could with propriety be required at his hands. Ah, cries the disappointed father, this is all well, as far as it goes, but how came you to neglect that first duty? You surely could not suppose that fidelity in these other matters, could atone for the total neglect of that.

Now God is such a Father, men are such sons. They have a list of their duties. At the head of these stands religion. They are commanded to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. But they attend to every thing else, and neglect this. Their bodies are clothed, their houses are made comfortable, their debts are paid, all the claims of good citizenship are regarded, but God, and the soul, and heaven, and hell are lost sight of. Ah this is the boasted wisdom of the world. Well is it called foolishness with God.

4. Every man's truest and firmest friends desire that he should become a Christian.

Is it unsuitable to include God among these friends? Listen then to his language. In one place he entreats, O do not this abominable thing that I hate. In another, he expostulates, why do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? In another, he encourages, let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon him. While in another place he threatens, he that believeth not shall be damned.

Think of the angels too. What is it that excites their interest as they wing their way on errands of mercy to this lower world? Upon what objects do they gaze with holy delight, as they pass over our cities, and towns, and villages? O, it is the penitent sinner that excites their regard. No matter how lowly he is in his own eyes, or how humble the cottage in which he lives, angels notice with intense interest, his tears of godly sorrow.

Pious relations also feel a deep interest in this matter. You can never know but by experience, how deep is the solicitude of a godly father, who sees his children growing up to trample the blood of the covenant under their feet. Words cannot express the feelings of a Christian mother, who enters day after day into her closet, exclaiming, what my son, what the son of my womb, and what the son of my vows. No language can describe the burden which lies upon the heart of some pious affectionate wife, whose husband is never seen to kneel in prayer by her side. These are things which must be felt in order to be understood.

Nay, we may go a step further, for *bad* men often wish to see their friends pious. The following case once occurred, a shrewd and intelligent father had embraced the cold and cheerless scheme of infidelity, while the wife of his bosom was a meek and devout Christian. They had a lovely daughter, who was suddenly brought to the borders of the grave. The father was sitting in an adjoining room conversing with a friend, when they were both summoned to the bed side, to witness the closing scene. As they stood by the pillow of death—the father, the mother, and this friend, the daughter raised her anxious eye to him who had been the instrument of her existence and said, Father I am about to die; do you wish me to die in the principles which you have taught me, or in those which my mother has taught me? This was a solemn question to the infidel parent. To waver now was virtually to abandon ground which he had long been occupying. But conscience even in this case was on the side of truth. Die, said he, my daughter, die in the principles which your mother taught you.

Yes, Hume himself would have said the same thing. Many a skeptical father and gay mother could be found, who would be grieved beyond measure to see a blooming and beautiful daughter giving herself up to the service of God. They would deem religion a poor appendage to the ball room, or the fashionable party. But let mortal disease invade the fair form of this same daughter, and bring her down pale and languid to her last bed, and their feelings would probably be entirely changed. The Bible, and the minister of the gospel, and prayer are not deemed out of place now. Ah, this is nature, in her extremity, coming to invoke the aid of religion. And shall she be branded with weakness for so doing?

5. The wisest and best men of every age have treated religion as a matter of high importance.

We do not ask you to call any man father on earth, or to pay any undue deference to mere opinions, by whomsoever such opinions are held. The religion of the Bible stands on a thousand times stronger basis than this. But who, that knows any thing of the world, is not aware that multitudes are governed almost altogether, in matters of this sort, by the authority of great names? The literary fame of some of the champions of infidelity has gone far to hide the enormity both of their creed and their conduct. But after all we need not fear to put the question at issue upon this ground alone. Immense as is the stake we hesitate not deliberately to make it, and we call upon the careless and unbelieving world to bring forth their strong array of bright and splendid names against God and religion. Let us stop a little to decide this point.

On our part we might refer for legislative wisdom to Moses, for sublime and lofty conceptions to Isaiah, for tender and moving pathos to Jeremiah, for pure doctrines and precepts to the Son of Mary, for close and manly argument to Paul, and for untiring benevolence, to all the Prophets and Apostles. But perhaps unbelievers will refuse to admit such testimony. Men of this stamp may be disposed to say of all such evidence, thou bearest record of thyself, thy record is not true. For the sake then of not seeming to take any advantage, we give up these names. Neither will we rely upon such cases as those of Solomon, and Daniel, and Nehemiah, though one of them was a king, another a statesman, and the third a courtier, and neither a minister at God's altar.

We are then to look about in the world to see on which side of this great question wisdom and virtue and goodness lie.

The great Lord Bacon is a host in himself. The early youth of this man, gave very striking indications of his future greatness, and he lived to scatter more light upon almost every field of knowledge, than was ever done by any uninspired man before. No other age can boast such a man. Now what did Bacon think about religion? Let the whole careless and skeptical world hear it, and be checked. "A smattering of philosophy may lead a man to infidelity, but a thorough insight into it will bring him back to the truth. The first principle of right reason is religion, and for my own part, I dare not die with any other thoughts." Thus felt, and thus spoke one of the profoundest men the world has ever seen.

Sir Isaac Newton is another name to which we turn with confidence. This man moved in an exalted sphere, when he counted the stars and measured the planets, and became as familiar with the face of the heavens, as the husbandman is with the surface of the fields over which he daily treads. But to speak of Newton as a philosopher merely, is not to tell half his worth. He delighted to look above the innumerable worlds and systems hanging in the immensity of space, to Him who made, and who governs them all. This man appears most truly great, when we see him laying down the telescope and taking up the Bible, when he turns aside from viewing the stars, to worship the babe of Bethlehem, and when he comes down from the proud eminence to which his talents



had raised him, to kneel at the foot of the cross. Does the careless world know that the great Newton was such a man?

The case of the celebrated Dr. Johnson, is equally in our favor. No name stands higher in English literature than that of Johnson, and from his decision in all matters of taste in criticism, it would be deemed almost presumptuous to take an appeal. But did this gigantic mind ever tremble and quail before the powers of the world to come? Yes, Johnson himself felt the need of religious consolations. You can scarcely conceive what an impression the things of eternity sometimes made upon his heart. He meditated, he reasoned he read the Bible, he wept, he prayed, and it was only the light of evangelical truth cheering his soul, that enabled him to die in peace and triumph. Thus ended the days of this wonderful man.

We might tell you too of the child-like piety of a Boyle, the refined taste of an Addison, the acute discrimination of a Locke, the strict conscientiousness of a Hale, and the unwearied compassion of a Howard. But we pause and ask for counter testimony. Exhibit a catalogue of the men, who have trampled religion under foot, and lived as if there were no God, and no judgment bar. Who are they? What are the enduring monuments of their wisdom? What the unfading traces of their goodness? There is Voltaire, with his dying breath cursing the companions of his folly, at one moment calling upon Christ for help, and at another blaspheming the name of the Nazarene. There is Paine, afraid to be left one moment alone in the dark, and at last a poor bloated, forsaken wretch, yielding up his soul in an agony of despair. Yes, and there is Hume too, the philosophic Hume, scarcely less an object of pity, not to say contempt. He plays at whist on his dying bed, and endeavors to keep his sinking courage up, by pitiful jests, on the very borders of the grave.

I beg you to weigh these cases. Then listen to Francis Newport, and hear him exclaiming just as the breath was leaving the body, "O, the insufferable pangs of hell and damnation." Contrast this with the last moments of the devout Payson. Hear him cry out, "The battle is fought, the battle is fought, and the victory is won, the victory is won forever." Then go and decide whether carelessness is reasonable. If it is wise and prudent to forget God, language has lost its meaning, death is an eternal sleep, and damnation is a dream."

6. Once more, the sorrows and death of Christ rebuke the apathy and indifference of men.

No one denies that there was such a man as Jesus Christ—if as Josephus says, it be lawful to call him a man—that he lived a blameless and benevolent life, and at last was put to death on the cross. The most careless man in the land will go as far as this. Now, if no more was true, we find enough in the history of the Savior's life, in the labors he performed, in the tears he shed, and in the agonies he bore, to melt any heart, not made of adamant. But if Jesus was Divine, if he died for a lost world, if there is no hope but in his blood, the case becomes interesting beyond all description.

Look at him as he preached, and toiled, and suffered, and mark the contrast between his anxiety and man's indifference. What multitudes are light and frivolous and gay; while he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Thousands of men can be found who never pray at all; but Jesus could spend every hour of a long and lonely night in prayer. They chaunt to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, but he was a companion of the afflicted. Why this difference? How is it that the Savior should have had such an overwhelming load of care upon him, and the very men for whom he bore it all, be merry and thoughtless?

See the holy sufferer. His cup was bitter, but rather than a world should die, he would not put it from his lips till it had been drained to its very dregs. The work must cost him his life, but his ardor was such, that he cried out, how am I straightened till it be accomplished? Follow him through his last

agony, and say, is it any wonder that angels lay down their harps, to look into this amazing subject?

Besides, what an influence has the story of Christ's life and death exerted on the state of the world? No book that was ever written has been read by such multitudes, or with such deep and solemn interest as the Gospel of God our Savior. No other history has awakened such emotions, or led to the putting forth of such efforts. While thousands have this precious volume in their hands, only to treat it with indifference; it finds its way to the garret of the poor widow, reaches the heart of the weather beaten sailor, visits the prisoner in his dungeon, and turns the heathen from his dumb idols.

Now in view of these several considerations, is there a man on earth who can lay his hand on his heart, and attempt a vindication of his own carelessness? Look at the subject in whatever light you please, and you cannot fail to see that it demands serious attention. Only go so far as to allow that the Bible may possibly be true, that there may be an eternal heaven and an eternal hell, and indifference to its communications is folly of the highest kind. But to believe in the reality of these things, and yet make light of them, is conduct for which we can find no appropriate name. It is not weakness, it is wisdom to be serious.

A good man was once asked, why he spent so much time in reading meditation, and prayer. He replied by simply uplifting his eyes and hands to heaven, and saying with great solemnity, "Forever, forever, forever!" This was reason enough for his seriousness, and so it is for the seriousness of any man. No one ever got some just idea of eternity, and of his own unpreparedness for that awful state, without having anxieties awakened in his bosom, such as he never felt before. It must be so in the very nature of the case. Let a deer be once smitten by the archer, and you will find it forsaking the herd and retiring into some quiet thicket, where it may bleed and die alone.

Contemplate facts as they occur. There is an active, enterprising man of business. Once he moved along among the gayest of the gay, but his heart has since been touched by the Spirit of the living God, and he now feels a load there which he neither knows how to carry, nor throw off. You may see him walking with downcast eyes and thoughtful step from the house of God to his own dwelling. His very aspect as he passes from one room to another, and the effort he makes to appear cheerful as he takes his wonted seat at the table, or the fireside, tell with sufficient plainness that there is agony in his soul. Oh, he has learnt that he is a sinner, and must be pardoned or lost.

Yonder too is an amiable intelligent youth. A few days since his feelings were as light and buoyant as the very air he breathed; but now he is borne down to the dust by an appalling consciousness of having offended God. What a change has taken place in so short a time! His countenance, his conversation, his deportment are all altered. Morning and evening, and perhaps at noonday, his seat in the family circle is empty, and were you to pass by his closet door, you might find him on his knees confessing his sins, and crying to God for mercy. The Bible has become his companion, and prayer his employment. Oh, is there any thing little or despicable in such feelings? An atheist may laugh at tears and prayers with perfect consistency, but no one else can. If a man believes the Bible, he must grant that seriousness, deep and daily seriousness is rational.

Permit me then to place this whole subject by the side of your consciences, and ask you to decide at once, whether you will be careless any longer.—You will not pretend that real happiness lies in the path which you are now pursuing. Your thoughtless indifference to the concerns of death, judgment, and eternity, may do for the bright and sunny portions of human life. But tell me plainly, does it answer for the silent and lonely hours of midnight? Has it any power to cheer and elevate the spirits while walking through a grave yard? Can it shed light upon the soul in the last struggle of dissolving nature? This

you will not pretend. If you are ever to enjoy genuine peace of mind, in the dark and stormy season of human life, you must open your hearts to the tranquilizing and subduing influences of the gospel.

But let me beg you to make no delay. Not long since a graduate of one of our colleges was heard to say, I have finished my collegiate education, I will now devote two years to the study of a profession, then I will take one year to see what there is in that mighty thing they call, religion. Yes, so proposed this blooming, careless youth, but God had far other results in view. Before this design was half accomplished, the unhappy young man suddenly fell sick, was seized with delirium, and died without hope. Oh my friends, my young friends, if ever you mean to consider this subject, begin now. The longest life is not too long to make your peace with God, and lay up an everlasting treasure in the heavens.

Before closing, I make you one more offer of pardon and eternal life. In the name of Him who bled and died for a lost world, I assure you, if you will repent and believe the gospel, you shall never perish but have everlasting life. Jesus Christ has authorized me to tell you, that there is boundless efficacy in his blood. He has no pleasure in your death. His heart is as full of compassion, as when he hung expiring on the cross. Only forsake your sins, and put your trust in Christ, so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

---

VAIN man, thy fond pursuits forbear ;

Repent!—thy end is nigh !

Death, at the farthest, can't be far—

Oh, think before thou die !

Reflect—thou hast a soul to save :

Thy sins—how high they mount !

What are thy hopes beyond the grave ?

How stands thy dread account ?

Death enters—and there's no defence—

His time, there's none can tell :

He'll in a moment call thee hence,

To heaven—or to hell !

Thy flesh, perhaps thy chiefest care,

Shall crawling worms consume :

But ah ! destruction stops not there—

Sin kills beyond the tomb.

To-day, the gospel calls ; to-day,

Sinners, it speaks to you :

Let ev'ry one forsake his way,

And mercy will ensue.

---